

High expectations for parents, students, staff.

Constant strive for excellence.

A working positive behavior program.

Happy students, staff, parents.

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Equivalent of ~~19~~ more days in school per year.

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Significantly higher test scores than our local districts.

Quality extra-curriculars, usually run by teachers.

Supported by MY tax dollars.

**MY CHOICE.**

These are the reasons why I left my home district with my three children last year for a charter school.

These are the reasons to pass the Parent Empowerment Bill.

I am a delighted parent at a thriving charter school, Holly Academy. Be not mistaken, we are not to be lumped in with unsuccessful charters, or those that are run by a for-profit company. We are highly successful AND self-managed; the true ideal for charter schools.

I had no idea the difference between a good school and a great school until I came across Holly Academy. There is only one choice outside of a public district within a 10 mile range for my family, and that school just wasn't for us. We remained at the local public school for 5 years until we found Holly Academy, which is a longer commute at 14 miles. Now that we've been at Holly Academy for one year, the differences in schools are remarkable. In fact, there are now 11 families, all from my neighborhood, who have made the same choice to attend Holly Academy. We value the dedicated staff, robust academics, the longer school day and greater amount of days, the behavioral expectations of our students, the creative electives in middle school, the ability to adequately teach children with special needs as well as those who are gifted, the foreign language curriculum beginning in Kindergarten, the numerous music and band programs offered to all students in and out of classroom hours, the focus on STEM curriculum – the list could continue. In fact, over 96% of parents surveyed last year felt Holly Academy promotes academic excellence! And 94% felt their students enjoy being at school. In an ideal world, all families should be able to experience the Holly Academy experience. Lifting the charter cap could help allow that.

Opponents of the Bill state that charter schools remove "local control". I'm not sure how much more local a self-run school can get! There are no levels of bureaucracy. Should a parent have an idea on a program or request a change in policy, it's a simple conversation away. Our School Board is composed of parents and community members and is always open to the public. The school administration follows the same Transparency laws that all public districts follow. In respect to the higher cost in administration for charters, if that allows me to have a true relationship with all of the people in charge of my children's academic future, it doesn't bother me. I feel much more in "control" of my students' school future than ever before.

Gary Miron would like lawmakers to invest in schools that already exist and “do a better job of turnaround”. Well, this parent doesn’t want to wait for that turnaround. With school choice, I am able to have an ideal school right now. That should be the right of every Michigan parent.

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~~I have seen the information my district’s administration is sending out to parents on these Bills. Districts~~ need to stop spending their time attacking charter schools with inaccurate information. Instead, they need to *learn* from successful charter schools like Holly Academy. They are watching families leave their district and rather than asking “why are they leaving?”, “what are we missing?” and “what can we change?” they simply go into attack mode. *Learning from something that works* is the reform that Michigan needs!

Mr. Miron also states that the charter schools in Detroit post lower scores than their district counterparts. However, he does not elaborate on how many charter schools outside of Detroit actually out-perform their districts, such as the case with Holly Academy. I live in a suburb and do not want my schools to be enveloped into a district which has a completely different situation. DPS traditional K-12 schools represent only 4% of the state’s K-12 population, so please do not misinterpret public districts’ propaganda wrapping all charters into Detroit’s scenario.

There are parents who are satisfied with their public schools. But there are many who are not – who want more for their children, who are willing to take a more active role in their education. These parents should have the right to better choices. Would we want our state to have one type of hospital, one type of housing, or even one sport team? Never. We want Michigan to be known for having a wide array of excellent choices, most especially in the education of our children. And we must be proactive to do this. Not passing the Parent Empowerment Bill will prevent excellent schools like Holly Academy from opening in our districts’ shuttered school buildings. These locations would open the doors for many more families to experience a choice. Not passing the Bills will allow districts to continue on the road of mediocrity. The people of Michigan deserve better. The people of Michigan deserve to have choices.

Respectfully submitted by:

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